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Jesus, Justice, and Sinner

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JESUS, JUSTICE, AND SINNER.

Jesus. Bring forth the Prisoner, Justice!

Justice. - - - Thy commands
Are done, just Judge, see here the Prisoner stands.

Jesus. What does the Prisoner say? what is the cause
Of his commitment?

Justice. He hath broke the laws
Of his great gracious God, conspired the death
Of that great Majesty that gave him birth,
And heaps transgression, Lord, upon transgression.

Jesus. How knowest thou this?

Justice. Even by his own confession,
His sins are crying, and they cry aloud;
They cry to heaven, they cry to heaven for blood.

Jesus. What say'st thou, sinner, hast thou ought
to plead,

That sentence should not pass? hold up thy head,
And shew thy brazen, thy rebellious face.

Sinner. Ah! me, I dare not, I'm too vile and base,
To tread upon the earth, much more to lift
Mine eyes to heaven; I need no other shrift
Than mine own conscience, Lord; I must confess
I am no more than dust, and no whit less
Than my indictment stiles me. Ah! if thou
Search too severe, with too severe a brow,
What flesh can stand? I have transgressed thy laws,
My merits plead thy vengeance, not my cause.

Justice. Shall I strike the blow?

Jesus. Hold, Justice, stay,
Speak, Sinner, what hast thou more to say?

Sinner. Vile as I am, and of myself abhorred,
I am thy handy work, thy creature, Lord,
Stamp'd with thy glorious image, and at first
Most like to thee, though now a poor accurst
Convicted caitiff, and degenerate creature,
Here trembling at thy bar.

Justice. Thy fault is greater;
Lord, shall I strike the blow?

Jesus. Hold, Justice, stay,
Speak, Sinner, hast thou nothing else to say?

Sinner. Nothing but mercy, mercy, Lord, my state
Is miserably poor, and desperate:
I quite renounce myself, the world, and flee
From sin to Jesus, from myself to thee.

Justice. Cease thy vain hopes, my God has vow'd
Abused mercy must have blood for blood!
Shall I yet strike the blow?

Jesus. Stay, Justice, hold!
My bowels yearn, my fainting blood runs cold,
To view the trembling wretch: methinks I spy
My Father's image in the Prisoner's eye.

Justice. I cannot hold—

Jesus. Then turn thy thirsty blade
Into my side—let there the wound be made!
Cheer up, my youth, redeem thy life with mine,
My soul shall smart, my heart shall bleed for thine.

Sinner. O groundless love! O love beyond degree,
The offended dies to set the offender free.
Mercy of mercies! he that was my drudge
Is now my advocate, is now my judge!
He suffers, pleads, and sentences alone,
Three I adore, and yet adore but one.

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